Japanese Fairy Tale Series, No. 11.

THE HARE OF INABA.

Told in English by Mrs. J. H. James.

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譯者　デエ、ス夫人

發行者　東京下谷上根岸町十七番地　長谷川武次郎

印刷者　全　京橋區弓町十五番地　柴田喜一

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THE HARE OF INABA.

Now, there were once eighty-one brothers, who were Princes in the land. They were all jealous of one another, each one wishing to be King, to rule over the others, and over the whole Kingdom. Besides this, each one wanted to marry the same Princess. She was the Princess of Yakami in Inaba.

At last they made up their minds

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that they would go together to Inaba, and each one try to persuade the Princess to marry him. Although eighty of these brothers were jealous of one another, yet they all agreed in hating, and being unkind to the eighty-first, who was good and gentle, and did not like their rough, quarrelsome ways. When they set out upon their journey, they made the poor eighty-first brother walk behind them, and carry the bag, just as if he had been their servant, although he was their own brother, and as much a Prince as any of them all.

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By and by, the eighty Princes came to Cape Keta, and there they found a poor hare, with all his fur plucked out, lying down very sick and miserable. The eighty Princes said to the hare,

"We will tell you what you should do.

Go and bathe in the sea water, and then lie down on the slope of a high mountain, and let the wind blow upon you. That will soon make your fur grow, we promise you."

So the poor hare believed them, and went and bathed in the sea, and

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afterwards lay down in the sun and the wind to dry. But, as the salt water dried, the skin of his body all cracked and split with the sun and the wind, so that he was in terrible pain, and lay there crying, in a much worse state than he was before.

Now the eighty-first brother was a long way behind the others, because he had the luggage to carry, but at last he came up, staggering under the weight of the heavy bag. When he sew the hare he asked, "Why are you lying there crying?" "Oh dear!" said the hare,

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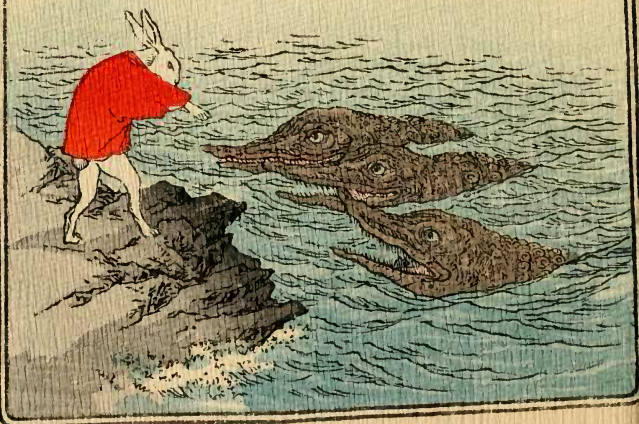
"just stop a moment and I will tell you all my story. I was in the island of Oki, and I wanted to cross over to this land. I didn't know how to get over, but at last I hit upon a plan. I said to the sea crocodiles, "Let us count how



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many crocodiles there are in the sea, and how many hares there are in the land. And now to begin with the crocodiles. Come, every one of you, and be down in a row, across from this island to Cape Keta, then I will step upon each one, and count you as I run across. When I have finished counting you, we shall count the hares, and then we shall know whether there are most hares, or most crocodiles."

The crocodiles came and lay down in a row. Then I stepped on them and counted them as I ran

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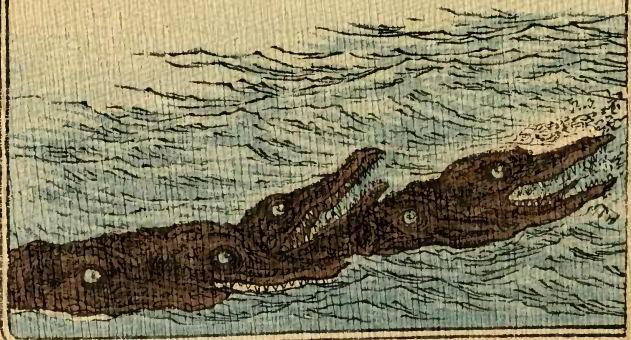
across, and was just going to jump on shore, when I laughed and said, "You silly crocodiles, I don't care how many of you there are. I only wanted a bridge to get across by." Oh! why did I boast until I was safe on dry land? For the last crocodile, the one which lay at the very end of the row, seized me, and



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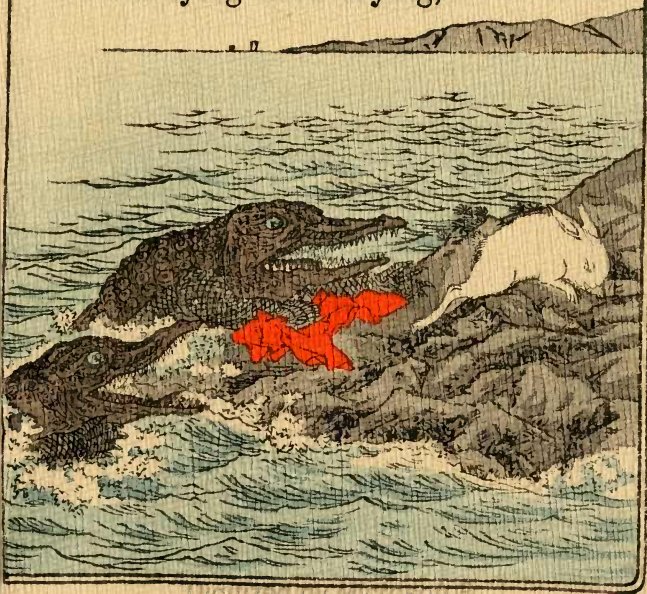
plucked off all my fur." "And serve you right too, for being so tricky." said the eighty-first brother; "however, go on with your story," "As I was lying here crying,"



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continued the hare, "the eighty Princes who went by before you, told me to bathe in salt water, and lie down in the wind. I did as they told me, but I am ten times worse than before, and my whole body is smarting and sore."

Then the eighty-first brother said to the hare, "Go quickly now to the river, it is quite near. Wash yourself well with the fresh water, then take the pollen of the sedges growing on the river bank, spread it about on the ground, and roll among it; if you do this, your skin will heal, and your fur grow again." So the hare

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time he was quite cured, and his fur grew thicker than ever.

Then the hare said to the eighty-first brother, "As for those eighty Princes, your brothers, they shall not get the Princess of Inaba. Although you carry the bag, yet your Highness shall at last get both the princess and the country."

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Which things came to pass, for the Princess would have nothing to do with those eighty bad brothers, but chose the eighty-first who was kind and good. Then he was made King of the country, and lived happily all his life.

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